

WE CLAIM:

- 1 1. A retractable scalpel device comprising:
 - 2 (a) a cover housing with top and bottom edges and right and left sides along a
3 length of the cover housing, the cover housing formed in substantially the
4 shape of a surgical scalpel handle and defining a longitudinal sliding bore, the
5 sliding bore having a blade opening defined in the cover housing at a forward
6 end, a closed end at a rear end of the cover housing, and a slot extending
7 through at least part of the left side of the cover housing;
 - 8 (b) a sliding piece comprising a forward section, on which is fixed a scalpel
9 blade, a mid section, and a U-shaped legs section, where the mid section has
10 a lateral extension through the slot and beyond the left side of the cover
11 housing to form an actuator substantially wider than the slot adapted to
12 permit a user to move the sliding piece in forward and rearward motion in the
13 slot and within the sliding bore;
 - 14 (c) the legs section comprising a sliding section with lateral dimensions
15 substantially wider and thicker than the mid section and adapted to slidingly
16 support the sliding piece in the sliding bore;
 - 17 (d) the legs section further comprising two flexible legs extending rearward from
18 the sliding section, where a rearward part of the legs are urged apart from
19 one another and have a releasable latching element urged against either a
20 top or bottom surface of the sliding bore;
 - 21 (e) spring means for urging the sliding piece rearward so that in a rearward rest
22 position the blade is covered by the cover housing and in a forward latched
23 position the blade has passed through the blade opening and is exposed for
24 surgical procedures; and
 - 25 (f) two releasable latch openings defined along opposite edges of the length of
26 the cover housing and adapted to engage the releasable latching elements
27 when a user moves the actuator in a forward direction to the forward latched
28 position.

- 1 2. The device of claim 1 wherein the two releasable latch openings are located at
- 2 about halfway along the length of the cover housing.

- 1 3. The device of claim 1 wherein the releasable latching means are adapted to prevent
- 2 rearward travel of the sliding piece from the forward latched position if only one of the
- 3 releasable latching elements are depressed so that it passes below an innermost edge
- 4 of its releasable latch opening.

- 1 4. The device of claim 1 wherein the releasable latching means are adapted so that
- 2 both releasable latching elements must be depressed so they pass below an innermost
- 3 edge of a releasable latch opening to which the releasable latching element is engaged
- 4 before spring means or actuator motion permits rearward travel of the sliding piece from
- 5 the forward latched position.

- 1 5. The device of claim 1 wherein a permanent latch is adapted to permanently latch the
- 2 sliding piece in one position along the length of the sliding bore.

- 1 6. The device of claim 5 wherein the permanent latch is adapted to latch the sliding
- 2 piece into one position rearward of the rest position.

- 1 7. The device of claim 6 wherein the permanent latch comprises permanent latch
- 2 extensions at each of the two legs and permanent latch receivers .

- 1 8. 1. A retractable scalpel device comprising:
 - 2 (a) a cover housing with top and bottom edges and right and left sides along a
 - 3 length of the cover housing and defining a longitudinal sliding bore, the sliding
 - 4 bore having a blade opening defined in the cover housing at a forward end,
 - 5 and a slot extending through at least part of the left side of the cover housing;

6 (b) a sliding piece comprising a forward section, on which is fixed a scalpel blade
7 and a slider legs section, where the slider legs section has a lateral extension
8 through the slot and beyond the left side of the cover housing to form an
9 actuator adapted to permit a user to move the sliding piece in forward and
10 rearward motion in the slot and within the sliding bore;
11 (c) the slider legs section comprising a sliding section with lateral dimensions
12 adapted to slidingly support the sliding piece in the sliding bore;
13 (d) the slider legs section further comprising two flexible legs extending rearward
14 from the sliding section, where a rearward part of the legs are urged apart
15 from one another and have a stepped extension urged against either a top or
16 bottom surface of the sliding bore; and
17 (e) two releasable latch openings defined along opposite edges of the length of
18 the cover housing and adapted to engage the stepped extension when a user
19 moves the actuator in a forward direction to the forward latched position.

1 9. The device of claim 8 wherein the two releasable latch openings are located at
2 about halfway along the length of the cover housing.

1 10. The device of claim 8 wherein stepped extensions are adapted to prevent rearward
2 travel of the sliding piece from the forward latched position if only one of the releasable
3 latching elements are depressed so that it passes below an innermost edge of its
4 releasable latch opening.

1 11. The device of claim 8 wherein the stepped extensions are adapted so that both
2 stepped extensions must be depressed so they pass below an innermost edge of a
3 releasable latch opening to which the stepped extension is engaged before actuator
4 motion permits rearward travel of the sliding piece from the forward latched position.

1 12. The device of claim 8 wherein a permanent latch is adapted to permanently latch
2 the sliding piece in one position along the length of the sliding bore.

1 13. The device of claim 12 wherein the permanent latch is adapted to latch the sliding
2 piece into one position rearward of the rest position.

1 14. The device of claim 13 wherein the permanent latch comprises permanent latch
2 extensions at each of the two legs and permanent latch receivers.

1 15. The device of claim 8 wherein spring means urge the sliding piece rearward so that
2 in a rearward rest position the blade is covered by the cover housing and in a forward
3 latched position the blade has passed though the blade opening and is exposed for
4 surgical procedures.